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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: APRIL 06, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of a suicide attack at an 'Imambargah' (Shiite mosque) in Chakwal killing 26 people dominated headlines in all newspapers on Monday. All newspapers highlighted reports that U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke is "likely to arrive today (Monday)." Also underscored was the report that the freed American UN official "John Solecki arrived in Bagram U.S. base." Several major dailies ran the U.S. Embassy's statement welcoming the release of Mr. Solecki. U.S. President Obama's remarks urging all nations to "strive to rid the world of nuclear arms" received extensive coverage. Newspapers also front-paged Foreign Minister Qureshi's statement that "Pakistan will neither give any blank check, nor will accept it."

Most major dailies ran editorials on different facets of terrorism including: the suicide attacks, drone strikes, Baitullah Mehsud's threats and the release of abducted American national Solecki. The center-right national daily, "The Nation," noted that "Pakistan is currently caught in a dangerous spiral where its 'inability' to fight the militancy might fall short of the U.S. expectations and result in drone attacks being extended far beyond the troubled tribal region." The leading mass circulation Urdu daily, "Jang," opined that "there is a strong possibility that if these drone attacks continue, it will become impossible for Pakistan to carry on the war on terror." Commenting on the flogging incident in Swat, the Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," observed that "despite the nation-wide condemnation, the whipping incident is gradually become victim of the national division over terrorism." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Bloodbath In Chakwal Teenager Blows Himself Up At Imambargah; 26 Killed, Over 40 Injured" "Dawn" (04/06)

"Twenty-six people were killed and more than 40 others injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up in Chakwal's main Imambargah on Sunday, causing widespread destruction."

"Malik Sees Foreign Hand In Chakwal Attack" "The News" (04/06)

"Advisor to Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik said on Sunday that the government would announce an anti-terrorism plan soon to crush terrorism by taking the nation into confidence. Talking to reporters in Sialkot, he said that foreign hand was behind the attack on Imambargah in Chakwal and other terrorism activities."

"Mehsud Claims Credit For Islamabad Carnage" "Dawn" (04/06)

"The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan has claimed responsibility for Saturday's suicide attack on barracks of Frontier Constabulary in Islamabad and warned that such attacks will continue. Hakeemullah Mehsud, the Deputy Chief of the banned militant organization, told 'Dawn' on phone that the bombing was carried out to avenge the recent drone attack in Orakzai tribal region."

"Taliban Warn Of Suicide Attacks Twice A Week" "Daily Times" (04/06)

"The Taliban on Sunday vowed that they would carry out two suicide attacks per week in Pakistan. Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud's deputy Hakimullah told AP."

"Holbrooke Likely To Arrive Today" "Dawn" (04/06)

"When U.S. special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan arrives in Pakistan this week he will be publicly feted for President Barack Obama's pledge of massive, long-term aid for a nation critical of America's strategy for turning around the war in Afghanistan. But the money doesn't come without conditions, and Pakistan is honing a list of questions that highlight significant differences over the right way to combat Al Qaeda and its growing band of regional allies, officials and analysts say."

"Are We Prepared For Obama Policy In The Region?" "The News" (04/06)

"The inter-agency meeting to be held at the Foreign Office on Monday, to prepare a strategy for talks with the visiting U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke, has been cancelled, sources in the Interior Ministry confirmed. Holbrooke is expected to meet President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday evening and the rest of the meetings are scheduled for Tuesday. As expected, the government failed to formulate a strategy where the issue of Afghanistan could be discussed by all political and military leaders around one table."

"U.S. Admiral Cultivates Pakistani Army Chief" "Daily Times" (04/06)

"For the United States, much may be riding on an unlikely relationship between America's highest-ranking military officer and Pakistan's Army Chief. Over cups of tea and the occasional cigar, the avuncular American admiral and the reserved general talk about terrorist threats and sensitive military operations in a region President Barack Obama deems the 'central front' in the fight against Al Qaeda. Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he has gone out of his way to build a rapport with his Pakistani counterpart, General Ashfaq Kayani, speaking to him regularly and holding 10 face-to-face meetings since November 2007. 'I'm a big believer that the worst time to try to get to know someone is during a crisis, so this constant dialogue I have with General Kayani is vital,' said Mullen, responding to questions from AFP by email."

"Solecki Arrives In Bagram U.s. Base" "Dawn" (04/06)

"UNHCR official John Solecki reached the Bagram U.S. airbase in Afghanistan on Sunday."

"U.S. Thanks Pakistan For Solecki's Release" "The News" (04/06)

"The government of United States of America thanked the Government of Pakistan on the release of John Solecki. In a press release issued in Islamabad on Sunday, it welcomed the release of American United Nations worker John Solecki."

"India Meddling In Balochistan: U.S. Journal" "Dawn" (04/06)

"One of the Most prestigious U.S. journals, 'Foreign Affairs' has revealed on impeccable authority that India has been pumping in huge amount of money to create unrest in Balochistan and that it has direct links with terrorist activities on the soil of Pakistan."

"Recognize Pakistan As N-Power, U.S. Think Tanks Asks Obama" "The

Nation" (04/06)

"The Obama Administration should encourage the Indo-Pak dialogue, including back-channel diplomacy on Kashmir, and acknowledge Islamabad's nuclear status, a task force formed by US-based Asia Society has suggested in comments which may raise hackles in India."

"No Blank Cheque To U.S. Either: FM" "The Nation" (04/06)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Sunday that no foreign military boot will step in Pakistan and our own law enforcement agencies and paramilitary forces will conduct anti terrorism operation inside the country. Talking to the newsmen in Multan, the Foreign Minister said that during his recent visit to Washington he conveyed clearly to the U.S. that NATO will not be allowed to conduct operation in Pakistan adding that it is not acceptable for Pakistan.... Mentioning a statement by U.S. President Barack Obama regarding 'No Blank Cheque,' FM said, Pakistan will neither give any blank cheque nor will accept it."

"U.S. Seeks Help In Search For 'Moderate Taliban'" "Dawn" (04/06)

"Pakistan and Afghanistan can help the United States in identifying moderate Taliban who are willing to lay down their arms, says U.S. National Security Adviser Gen. James Jones. In an interview to 'Dawn,' Gen. Jones also stressed the need for greater cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the fight against terrorists."

"U.S. Hopeful Of Turning The Tide In Afghanistan" "Dawn" (04/06)

"About 17,000 extra U.S. troops headed to Afghanistan would allow security forces to begin overcoming the Taliban in the volatile south, the top U.S. military commander said in Kabul on Sunday. 'I am convinced that the additional military capacity will certainly start to allow us to turn the tide in the south where it has not gone well,' Admiral Mike Mullen told reporters on a trip to Kabul."

"Swat Girl Gives The Lie To Video Drama" "The News" (04/06)

"Chand Bibi, the young girl who was shown being flogged by the Swat Taliban in a videotape aired on television channels, gave a statement to a Qazi, or judge, on Sunday, denying the incident. Mian Iftikhar Hussain, the NWFP Information Minister, told 'The News' that she made the statement to Mohammad Riaz, the judge of the Qazi Court for Matta Tehsil, and the commissioner of Malakand division, Syed Mohammad Javed, both of whom visited her village, Kala Killay, in Kabal Swat district on Sunday."

"SC To Take Up Swat Girl's Flogging Today" "Daily Times" (04/06)

"An eight-member larger bench of the Supreme Court (SC), headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, will today (Monday) take up a suo motu notice on the video footage of a 17-year-old girl being flogged in public by the Taliban."

"Zardari To Sign Deal Despite Flogging: Hoti" "The News" (04/06)

"NWFP Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti says there may be a delay but no deadlock on the issue of President Asif Zardari signing the Nizam Adl law in Swat."

"Sufi Says Govt. Must Empower Qazi Courts Immediately" "Daily Times" (04/06)

"Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) chief Sufi Muhammad on Sunday demanded the government to immediately authorize the Sharia courts to hear all cases. In his address at Galooch area in Kabal tehsil, Sufi said the government had not 'fully' empowered the Qazis to hear 'major cases.'"

"18 Militants Killed In Mohmand Clash" "Dawn" (04/06)

"Security forces claimed on Sunday to have killed 18 militants in a clash in Kana area of Anbar valley of Mohmand tribal region on Saturday night. Officials said another 20 militants were injured in the clash in which helicopter gunships were used."

"Girls' School Blown Up In Bannu" "Daily Times" (04/06)

"Unidentified men blew up a girls' school in Jahangir Khel, Bannu in the precincts of Miryan Police Station on Sunday."

"Bajaur Women Barred From Acquiring NICs" "The News" (04/06)

"The outlawed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Bajaur Agency has barred women from acquiring computerized national identity cards (CNICs) and receiving financial assistance under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) as, according to them, it was against Islamic teachings."

"Proposed Duty-Free Access: Textile Industry Slams U.S. Conditions" "Business Recorder" (04/06)

"Pakistani textile industry is, reportedly, deeply concerned about the conditions attached by the U.S. to the proposed duty-free access of textiles to be limited to Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) located at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"In A State Of War," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/06)

"U.S. drones raining down missiles on the restive tribal region in pursuit of militants on the one hand and suicide bombers blowing themselves up at crowded public places and security establishments on the other, present a picture of the country at war.... Pakistan is currently caught in a dangerous spiral where its 'inability' to fight the militancy might fall short of the U.S. expectations and result in drone attacks being extended far beyond the troubled tribal region. The Americans need to be convinced to dispel the perception that our intelligence apparatus is covertly collaborating with the militants. But at the same time the government should also put its act together and devise a comprehensive policy to defeat the fast spreading scourge."

"Suicide And Drone Attacks," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (04/06)

"We must keep in mind that the suicide attack at the FC barracks in Islamabad took place immediately after the U.S. missile attack in North Waziristan. The first-ever U.S. drone attack in North Waziristan demonstrates that the U.S. is expanding its drone attacks in this area. It is a matter of serious concern that the terrorists' network is also expanding in the country. Now it is essential that the Government of Pakistan must assume a serious and clear policy regarding the U.S. drone attacks, and make realize the international community that these strikes are not only creating resentment and anger among local community, but also damaging Pakistan's integrity, independence and sovereignty."

"Counter-Terrorism In A Divided Land," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/06)

"Despite the nation-wide condemnation, the whipping incident is gradually becoming victim of the national division over terrorism. Are we being killed because we are fighting America's war; or are we dying because the terrorists want to take over the country? The media is heavily tilted along with the opposition politicians in favor of the first cause. Civil society is being heavily influenced by the TV channels and is becoming vulnerable to the rhetoric of retired army officers who say terrorism can't be fought and the correct policy is to fight the Americans out of Afghanistan instead of fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban out of Pakistan. Terrorism has to be fought, if not as terrorism than as a law and order problem."

"U.S. Congressmen's Letter To Obama," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (04/06)

"Democratic and Republican Congressmen from Michigan, Ohio, Hawaii, California, Wisconsin and other states have written a letter to

President Barack Obama asking him to reconsider his orders to send more troops to Afghanistan.... U.S. Envoy Richard Holbrooke and Admiral Mike Mullen are to present new demands in their Islamabad visit today. Pakistan's problems would increase manifold even if one of the demands was accepted. They want Pakistan and America to jointly wage a war in Afghanistan and FATA and destroy themselves.... In the light of Congressmen's letter to President Obama, Government of Pakistan too should adopt strong stance before the American officials and tell them that peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan hinges on withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan."

"Uniting To Kill Baitullah Mehsud," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/06)

"The Americans have likely agreed to cooperate on Mehsud after twice ignoring precise triangulation of Mehsud's movement by Pakistan. The earlier American policy of letting Mehsud wreak havoc in Pakistan was flawed.... What Baitullah Mehsud is doing together with his master organisation Al Qaeda is global terrorism. If he is killing Pakistanis today, tomorrow he will be killing others all over the world. Pakistan can tackle him but lacks the technological capacity and funds to prepare itself for the job."

"Terrorism's Tentacles," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (04/06)

"Mehsud has proved to be elusive for the U.S. intelligence and security officials so far. He has been taking hostage soldiers and threatened to behead them. The tribesmen had grown so bold that they had asked the security forces to withdraw forces from areas inhabited by the Mehsud tribesmen after negotiations led to the release of kidnapped FC personnel. The actions of Mehsud have also put the frail peace process between the government and the TTP in danger of collapsing.... This is a very critical juncture in the war on terror and Pakistan's internal security situation. Some sections of the Taliban seem to have grown bolder and stronger but we should also keep the fact in view that peace deals brought at least a semblance of peace and calm in the troubled areas. Military action or peace deals? Perhaps a careful combination of the two will produce some results."

"Free At Last," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/06)

"It is matter of great relief that he (Solecki) is free at last after being kept as hostage for 61 days. With the country already facing a mounting challenge of militancy one would expect internal grievances not to spill over to violence or kidnapping that would create more problems for the country."

"For How Long This Game Of Death And Destruction Will Continue?," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (04/06)

"The government, political parties, civic representatives, NGOs and the media raised hue and cry over the phony footage of the flogging incident in Swat. It seems that Pakistan's electronic media and the liberal elements of the society were dancing to the U.S. tune to divert attention from the drone attacks. On the contrary, neither the Government, nor the political parties, or any of the NGOs are paying heed to the U.S. drone attacks and the resulted deaths of dozens of innocent women, girls and others in border areas."

"The Video That Shook Pakistan," an op-ed by Syed Mansoor Hussain in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/07)

"An important point, however, is that there does exist a considerable undertow of sympathy for Taliban-style justice in the hearts if not the minds of many Pakistanis. This is because of a lack of access to justice and an abiding sense of helplessness that ordinary people feel when confronted by a high handed and frequently uncaring bureaucracy, a corrupted legal system and an equally corrupt but entirely ineffectual police force."

"The Real Battle," an op-ed by Zafar Hilaly in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/06)

"As to how we should deal with those who subject those who do not share their version of the Sharia to lashes and beheadings, the answer is, take them on and defeat them. Obviously, given the character of the enemy, the fight will be one in which no quarter is asked and none given.... The Taliban are counting on the fact that the peoples of the areas which presently constitute Pakistan will, when it comes to confronting invaders, surrender. The Taliban take heart from the fact, that though battle has not yet been joined in earnest, Pakistan has already surrendered in Swat and FATA."

"No One Left To Protest For Me," an op-ed by Rauf Klasra in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (04/06)

"There was a time some years back when Taliban used to drag some women in the street of Afghanistan and put them to death publically. And our establishment and its intellectuals considered them (Taliban) as Pakistan's strategic assets, and fulfilled their every fair or foul demand in the larger national interest. Now there is no public execution or flogging in Afghanistan, as same is happening in our own Swat, and our own people are committing this crime. President Zardari, PM Gilani, ANP leader Asfandiyar Wali and the military establishment are to blame for this inhuman incident, as they very easily handed over a big state of Pakistan to these guys (Taliban)."

"Urban Terrorism And State Response," an op-ed by Shahzad Chaudhry in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/06)

"The most strategic thing to do now for the military establishment is to state in unambiguous terms its clear divorce from past policies. More specifically, the following needs to be done. Ask the Americans to fill up the existing deficiencies: airlift capacity, night-combat capability, modern communications, new methodologies in net-centric warfare enabling detection of threat and response on almost near real-time basis."

"Pak Remains A Target Despite Change In U.S.," an op-ed by M. Ashraf Mirza in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (04/06)

"Peace will prevail in the region only after the vacation of US occupation of Afghanistan. And in that will also lie the end of terrorism and militancy. Obama's equation of Pakistan with Afghanistan is also unjust and unwarranted and has rightly evoked strong reaction from Prime Minister Yusuf Reza Gilani, who termed the U.S. President's insinuations as 'unfair.'"

"Bury Al Qaeda Ghost," an op-ed by Iftekhhar A. Khan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/06)

"Wrapping defeat in euphemism, Bush in his last year in office had said: 'We are not winning war in Afghanistan.' Obama has inherited Bush's losing war. Instead of reappraising the past strategy to determine the causes of failure, he has decided to inject more troops. Quite erroneously, he thinks troop surge will help NATO forces to gain control, without realizing that it will in fact cause an upsurge in resistance. More exposure of troops will result in more killing on both sides. Troops can never control popular uprising of the people.... U.S. war against Taliban and Al-Qaeda has triggered a class war and anti-Americanism."

"The 'Contact Group': India And Iran," an op-ed by Gen. (R) Mirza Aslam Beg in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/06)

"The Americans are now trying to woo Iran and make them partners with India, as the 'Contact Group' to help establish American power and influence in the region.... It is essentially Sunni in outlook, and belongs to Pakistan, as much as to Afghanistan, as a factor of unity. The Americans want the Shia Crescent to be pitched against it and India has emerged as the willing partner to accomplish the mission."

"Big Numbers," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/06)

"The money that will - eventually - come to us courtesy of the Kerry-Lugar bill has nothing to do with the G-20; that is America investing in its own regional interests.... For the rest of the G-20 outcomes it is not going to have an immediate impact on us directly, but an indirect impact as the global economy recovers."

"The Problem With Aid," an op-ed by Huma Yusuf in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/06)

"Many in the corridors of power must be fretting about the indefinite postponement of the hearing for the Kerry-Lugar bill, which seeks \$1.5bn per year in non-military aid for Pakistan.... The Pakistan government should learn from these initiatives and take advantage of the delay in the Kerry-Lugar bill to implement a system that can make the delivery of development aid transparent.... As conditions across Pakistan worsen, such an open commitment would be a step in the right direction."  
Patterson